

Subject: **Gold King Mine Release - Regional Update #11**

Date: **20 August 2015**

Background

The Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colorado has had a continuous discharge of acidic mine drainage that is a historic contributor of lead, arsenic, zinc, copper, and cadmium into the Cement Creek drainage of the Animas River watershed. On August 5, 2015, an estimated 3 million gallons of mine wastewater released into the upper portions of Cement Creek, and into the Animas River.

Executive Summary

- **Field operations associated with Navajo Nation have been suspended until further notice.**
- **EPA issued a press release yesterday, August 19, 2015 stating that water quality in the San Juan River has now returned to levels measured before the release entered the Navajo Nation.**
<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/0/6CA2EE5CC335927585257EA7001294F4>
- **Water Advisories Lifted:** New Mexico announced that drinking water systems and recreational activity along the Animas and San Juan rivers can resume. The City of Durango announced that they had resumed pumping raw water for water drinking water treatment and distribution; and La Plata County announced that the Animas River was open to recreational use. The State of Utah also lifted their advisories for Utah Crop Irrigation and Livestock.
- **EPA Region 9 continues to coordinate with representatives from the Navajo Nation, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the States of AZ, Utah, NM, and federal agencies Bureau of Reclamation, the National Park Service, and US Geological Survey.**

Current Actions

- **The NN President has indicated on 8/20 that restrictions on use of the San Juan River may be lifted for irrigation purposes by this weekend.**
- **Sampling along the San Juan River is on hold until further notice. The Glen Canyon ICP will continue sampling in the vicinity of Lake Powell.**
- **Water tank and feed delivery to Navajo Nation is on hold until further notice.**
- **On 8/19, the Lake Powell Branch hosted EPA Region 9 Technical Specialists, USGS, State of Arizona, State of Nevada, and State of California in the daily conference call with the Utah Division of Water Quality, Department of Environmental Quality, for the purpose of collaborating on the interpretation of all available San Juan River response sampling data.**
- **Operations at the Lake Powell ICP are completed and personnel will begin demobilizing today. One EPA START contractor will be joining the USCG/NPS Lake Powell sampling team this afternoon.**
- **Utah DEQ posted both graphs of its data and explanations of this data on yesterday afternoon, August 19th. DEQ scientists believe that the highest levels of contaminants associated with the initial spill event have passed through the San Juan River in Utah. To view detailed information see the link:**
<http://www.deq.utah.gov/Topics/Water/goldkingmine/index.htm>
- **On Monday August 17, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) officials announced it has examined data provided by states upstream of Lake Powell and closer to the Gold King Mine spill. ADEQ's analysis of data released by the Utah Department of Environmental Quality of samples collected about 100 miles from Lake Powell (closest Utah sample) shows that water quality conditions in the San Juan River upstream of Lake Powell are generally consistent with pre-spill conditions. See more at:**
<https://ein.az.gov/emergency-information/emergency-bulletin/adeq-update-colorado-gold-king-mine-spill>
- **The Attorney Generals of Utah and Colorado visited the Gold King Mine site yesterday (8/19).**

- On 8/18 EPA released additional water quality data from August 13, 2015, on the San Juan River between Farmington and Shiprock, New Mexico. Data can be found here:
<http://www2.epa.gov/goldkingmine/gold-king-mine-data-august-18-2015>
Each surface water sample was analyzed for metals including arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury. Due to the highly variable conditions typical of this segment of the river, additional testing will be conducted, and we continue to work closely with the Navajo Nation EPA on assessing drinking water, agriculture, livestock, and other critical water needs.

Public meetings and outreach:

- **The Public Hotline number (1-844-607-9700) is being transferred to EPA HQ.**
- **Meetings at the Olijato, Aneth and Navajo Mountain Chapters have been cancelled.**
- **Tonight, August 20, there will be a public meeting/Open House in Durango hosted by San Juan County, CO. EPA has been invited to present an overview of the response and assist with directing people to focused, topic-specific tables.**
- UAC provided assistance to local residents regarding claims processing related to the response on 8/18.
- Region 6, 8, 9 continue to hold joint Regional Response Team calls with State and Federal Agencies for situational updates.

Personnel On-Site

2 R9 OSCs
1 R10 OSC
1 R9 PIO
4 R9 CIC
2 R9 LNC/LNO
1 R9 Laboratory
8 USCG PST

Key Issues

- **Field operations associated with Navajo Nation have been suspended until further notice.**
- Utah has requested historical water quality data from Navajo Nation in the San Juan River